

# Become A Special Educator In Tennessee

## Feature Story



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I am Tabatha Wright, and I currently reside in Atoka, Tennessee. After marrying my naval enlisted husband and relocating to Great Lakes, Illinois with my two small school-aged children, I decided to accept a position as a paraprofessional with the Special Education District of Lake County (SEDOL). At the completion of my first year with SEDOL, I realized my love and compassion for children with special needs and was certain that special education was the profession I would pursue. After careful investigation and consideration, I enrolled in the College of Lake County's education program where I earned my Associate of Arts degree in education two years later and once again relocated to Atoka, Tennessee.

After securing a position as a paraprofessional in a self contained classroom, I conducted numerous internet searches and personal inquiries for a university offering a rigorous education program with the possibility of tuition assistance. I received a recruitment ad for paraprofessionals to participate in the BASE-TN (Become A Special Educator in TN) Initiative, a Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education, program that provides tuition support to participants contingent upon service in a Tennessee public school system two years for every 30 credit hours of financial support received. In the spring of 2005 and after careful consideration, I applied to the University of Memphis for BASE-TN financial support.

Through matriculation in the University of Memphis' rigorous education program, I graduated in the fall of 2007, magna cum laude, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education. Upon graduation, I received my Tennessee teacher license in special education and excitedly accepted a position with Memphis City Schools in January 2008 as a special educator. As a resource teacher and graduate student of Walden University, I am currently enrolled in an elementary education program, specializing in math and reading, with an anticipated graduation date of fall 2009.

As I rejoice in "the light at the end of the tunnel," I am finally at the end of my initial education journey. I could not have asked for a more rewarding opportunity. Because of training received through the University of Memphis and the financial support of the BASE-TN Teaching Program, I am doing what I love. I am educating elementary students with special needs, assisting them in experiencing success and encouraging them to join me in becoming life long learners.